

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAPE T 00121 261610Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-15 SSO-00 /026 W
-----030584 261628Z /40 R

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6648
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0121

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CARR, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: PRESS SPOKESMAN COMMENT ON ARREST OF US JOURNALIST IN
SOWETO

REF: (A) JOHANNESBURG 0151, (B) STATE 020820,

1. CG JOHANNESBURG HAS RECHECKED FACTS IN TEMPORARY
DETENTION OF HEINZERLING AND ROBERTS. DETAILS CONTAINED
REFTEL A SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT WITH FOLLOWING REVISION
AND ADDITION:

(A) STATEMENT THAT THEIR PASSES EXPIRED AT 1600 IS INCORRECT.
PASSES WERE VALID UNTIL 1800 (THEY WERE DETAINED AT 1630) SO
HEINZERLING WAS JUSTIFIED IN HAVING SAID FOR QUOTATION TO LOCAL
PRESS "WHAT THEN IS VALIDITY OF THESE PASSES?".

(B) THEIR CAMERAS WERE RETURNED UNTOUCHED AND A TAPE
RECORDER WAS NOT TAKEN FROM THEM AT ANY TIME.

2. THE TWO JOURNALISTS VIEW THEIR TEMPORARY DETENTION
(NOT ARREST) AS A MISTAKE BY AN OVERZEALOUS GREEN
POLICE SERGEANT NEWLY ARRIVED FROM THE ORANGE FREE
STATE. AS SOON AS SUPERIORS BECAME INVOLVED AT THE
PROTEA POLICE STATION THEIR EQUIPMENT WAS RETURNED AND
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THEY WERE RELEASED. IT IS JOURNALISTS VIEW, AND OURS,
THAT DETENTION DID NOT REPRESENT PART OF A SYSTEMATIC,
DELIBERATE HARASSMENT OF NEWSMEN. JOURNALISTS HAVE
NOT REQUESTED ANY ACTION FROM US.

3. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, I DO NOT BELIEVE WE
SHOULD OVERREACT. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT TWO

REPORTERS WERE IN SOWETO WITH PROPER AUTHORIZATION,
COVERING A PUBLIC EVENT AND OTHERWISE NOT ENGAGED IN
ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES. THEREFORE, THERE WAS NO
JUSTIFICATION FOR DETENTION. FACT THAT THEY WERE
PROMPTLY RELEASED WHEN SUPERIORS INTERVINED AND ALL
THEIR EQUIPMENT WAS RETURNED TO THEM UNTAMPERED
MITIGATES THE UNJUSTIFIED ACTION OF THE POLICE SERGEANT.
A MEASURED RESPONSE WOULD BE FOR ME AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY
TO EXPRESS SURPRISE AND CONCERN AT BRAND FOURIE AND
DEPUTY MINISTER IN CHARGE OF INFORMATION (LA GRANGE)
THAT AMERICAN NEWSMEN IN POSSESSION OF PROPER DOCUMENTATION
AND OTHERWISE PROPERLY ENGAGED SHOULD HAVE BEEN
HARASSED IN THIS WAY. I WOULD ADD THAT I HOPE THERE WOULD
NOT BE A REPETITION.
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